

Psalm 63

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[0 : 00] It's great to be with you guys tonight. So when I was 13 years old, I began to play the guitar. And when you play guitar, a lot of times you go through different phases where there are different, whether it's rock, country, whatever genre of music it is, where you start trying to emulate the people that you hear.

And so you go through these different phases, whether it's like a blues phase or a jazz phase or whatever. And I had a few people for some reason try to get me to go through a pink Floyd phase. And that never happened. However, I was working out one time in the gym and pink Floyd came on over the speakers and it was the song Comfortably Numb.

Do you all know the song that I'm talking about? And I began listening to the words of that song and just that phrase Comfortably Numb kept going over and over in my head.

And I just thought, you know what, that feels like a description of many of the phases that we were just in our walk with the Lord where we just feel maybe that we're comfortably numb.

[1 : 03] And I'm not necessarily talking about a time maybe that, you know, you feel like your sin has separated you from the Lord. I'm not talking about where you feel lukewarm in your commitment to the Lord, where he would you know, spew you out of his mouth.

Not that, but just those times in your life where you're neither content nor discontent, where you're neither feeling passionate nor dispassionate.

You're neither pursuing the Lord nor necessarily running from him, but you're kind of comfortable in your numbness. Now maybe this is just me, but I feel like this is a pretty common occurrence in our walk with Lord.

And to be honest, I feel like this is the song that helps me during those times, but also I think it speaks to those times when we go through that and David has some helpful things to show us in this Psalm as he was singing to the Lord.

And as Corey read, it starts out with this little superscript that says a Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

[2 : 07] The traditionally they would look at this passage, scholars would look at it and say that when David was in the wilderness of Judah, that was either in first Samuel chapters 22 and 23 when he was running from Saul or in second Samuel 15 and 16 when he was actually running from his own son, Absalom, when Absalom staged a coup and tried to overthrow him.

Because in verse 11, David refers to himself, there's the king. I believe that this is actually when he is in fleeing for his life from his home, from his own son.

But whatever the situation is, we see that he is literally in the wilderness and it's one of the hardest times, one of the lowest times of his life where he is probably someone very close to him that he loved has betrayed him and actually wants to kill him.

That's a pretty tough time to be in. If you've ever been in relational conflict with someone, that in and of itself can be enough to kind of put you in kind of depression, anxiety kind of areas.

But we're talking like fleeing for his life. If you even read in second Samuel 15 and 16 where David is fleeing from Absalom, just it's really sad passage.

[3 : 25] Just talks about him. He's fleeing, he's weeping, he's got people that are with him, they're weeping as they're leaving the city knowing that their lives are in danger and having to flee their homes.

But what it does give us is we have a song, a song of David in this time that can help us when we are in maybe not a literal wilderness, but a spiritual wilderness where David here is feeling discomfort and struggle, sadness, maybe depression.

He's away from his home, away from everything that is known fleeing for his life and he gives us some insight on what we can do during those times while he's in conflict.

So tonight we're talking about in those times maybe in a spiritual wilderness, how do we long for God? So tonight in Psalm 63 we're talking about longing for God.

And in verse one, David says, oh God, you are my God. This word God is not the covenant word of the covenant name of the Lord Yahweh, but instead He's talking about the powerful creator and sustainer of the universe.

[4 : 36] You who know the stars by name, you are my God. You're the God of me. You belong to me. We are in a relationship here.

And if you think about that, to be in a place where you can say, I know that I'm calling out to the one who knows the stars by name, who everything depends on for life and breath and all things and you're in a personal relationship with me.

Oh God, you are my God. He has a personal relationship there with God and he's calling out to him and he says, earnestly I seek you. Now some of the older translations might actually have early I seek you.

It's a word that literally means like early in the morning. It has this idea of arising with eager anticipation like what I always think about is, you know, Christmas time when I was a kid and I can't sleep because I want to get up and go see what's under the tree and get to have all the good food and all that get to see all the family.

I'm so excited I can hardly sleep. It's that kind of idea where I'm anticipating this so eagerly that I just want to get up and do it. And he's saying early, earnestly, wholeheartedly, I'm seeking you.

[5 : 56] He says, my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you. This idea of his soul and his flesh, he's basically saying everything that makes me me, my total being wants you.

I'm seeking you with all of my heart, my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you. I'm longing for you with my whole being.

If you are in a wilderness, one of the things that they tell us, I don't know that I've ever actually been in a wilderness when I wasn't like in a car or something, but they say if you're ever in a wilderness, one of the things that's on the forefront of your mind is where is the water source?

Where can I find water? Then you start thinking about food, but it's like, I am thirsting. I have got to find water. It's an obsession. It becomes the forefront of their minds.

And that's the way David is saying his relationship with God is. Eager anticipation, thirsting, deep down longing. I want to know you God.

[7 : 02] Earnestly, I seek you. My soul thirsts for you. My flesh faints for you. Now I've never been like that kind of thirsty that you would experience in the wilderness when you don't have water, a dry and weary land where there is no water.

But I did grow up playing sport in the nineties where all of my coaches would approach training as if like they grew up in a time where they thought if you gave water to the players during a training that it was a sign of weakness.

And so they're there to make you tougher. And these coaches that I had, they went through that and kind of wanted to make us tougher and put us through that. So I've been thirsty before. I'm not going to lie. Not maybe not to the extent that David is saying here, but I do get what he's saying of like being thirsty.

I long for you. I'm craving it. It's on the forefront of my mind. And he's saying that about God. He's literally physically in a wilderness and it's reminding him of the way he wants to long for God.

If you're in the wilderness, knowing how to locate water becomes an obsession. And that's the way we need to approach our relationship with God.

[8 : 20] Now why would we seek God like that? Why would it be like this obsession where we were actually waking up early in the morning because we're anticipating like I want to meet with God.

I'm seeking him right now with all of my heart. Like why would we seek God like that? Well it's because we're convinced that whatever we seek like that would satisfy us.

I mean think about some of the things that we know we need. There really are needs like water and food like in this passage. He's in the wilderness. He needs water and food.

But even the deeper things of the heart like peace. If you're ever in a place where you don't have peace with a family member or a friend or there's not peace at work, you long for that peace.

You know I'm talking about where you got that feeling in the pit of your stomach and you just I just want to have it go away and have peace. I want my relationships to be good. God gives us peace in ways that transcend all understanding in Christ.

[9 : 23] God gives us security and stability which is one of the deepest longings that we have since we're children to have security, stability.

We all want to know that we're taken care of and our Heavenly Father knows what we need even before we ask it. We all want comfort. We just want to know that everything is going to turn out the way that it should.

That all things will be made right. And we find that in God. In Jesus Christ we know that all things will be made new. All things will be made right.

We have a deep longing inside of us to know that there's a meaning and a purpose to life. In Christ we find that the meaning of our existence is to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever.

We know why we're here on earth. And one of the things that is crucial for us is to have hope. We need to have hope and God gives us the assurance that we can put our faith and trust in Him.

[10 : 24] Even Romans 5 says we don't have to be ashamed to hope because God's love is poured out through our hearts through the Spirit's been given to us. We don't have to be afraid to hope that we're going to be let down.

We find that in God. Now in university we studied Maslow's hierarchy of needs. You're familiar with that, right? Even secular people who come up with a list of these are the deep things that people need starting with like the physical needs at the bottom to have food, clothing and shelter and security and stability all the way up to finding purpose and meaning in life.

secular people can identify that we need this and we find all of those things in God through Christ. Why would we long for God?

Because we know that that is where we're going to be satisfied. If only Jesus would have told us that, right? I'm the bread of life.

He who comes to me will never hunger. He who believes in me will never what? Thirst. He satisfies the very longings of our soul.

[11 : 30] But yet when we're comfortably numb we tend to look to other things to satisfy us, thinking that other things can come through for us when only God can fill that longing.

Think about some of those things that you've longed for. I mean truly longed for. Like there's this holiday that you've been looking forward to and been saving up for and accruing more off time whatever it is.

You've been waiting for this, longing for this, hoping for this. If you've ever encountered a time like that then when you get in a fight with a co-worker or a family member, part of you is like, it's okay, I'm out of here in a week.

I'll be gone. I have something to look forward to that helps me get through that tough time. And we do that with everything whether it's like a new home, a new car, material things, looking forward to going to a new restaurant, all these little things that we're so satisfied with so we think, looking forward to cleaning to, hoping in, daydreaming about when our souls are longing for God.

And David says, in the wilderness, my soul thirsts for you, my flesh thanks for you. Only God can provide what we need and what we're longing to.

[12 : 46] And God wants us to look at him like that so that we would say, it doesn't matter what happens to me today, I have God. And I know that in his sovereign plan for my life, he's going to make all things right in his perfect timing.

And I can put my hope and I don't have to be afraid to hope in him because of that. Then we see in verse three that David says, the reason because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.

Your love is better than life itself. David is in the wilderness running for his life. And it's incredible that in this passage, he doesn't record asking for help.

What he's asking for is God's presence. He's not begging him to rescue him from his enemies, which he does in other places. Now he states that he believes God is going to do that.

But what he's asking for is not the hand of God, but the face of God. I want your presence. His very son, and you read the passages about Absalom like he loved Absalom.

[14 : 01] He feels betrayed and maybe it is Saul and he's who is his father-in-law, but he feels betrayed, he's hurt, he's literally running for his life away from friends, away from family, away from

home.

But yet he's not asking for help. He's asking for the presence of the Lord. Do we long for the Lord like this?

Even as I was preparing for this passage, I would wake up in the mornings and just because it was on my mind, I'm like, am I eager to get up and to encounter God to meet with him this morning?

Or am I just going to read my Bible so I have this mental checklist and I feel like I've done my duty for the day. How do we approach our relationship with God? Do we long for him?

Longing and eager anticipation to find him because his love is better than life. Do we believe that, that his love is better than life?

[15:07] When you think about how Jesus describes eternal life, John 17.3, what does he say?

This is eternal life, that they may know you, the one true God, the only true God in Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

He tells us that eternal life is knowing God. It's having a relationship with God through Jesus. That is what it means to have eternal life. Do we approach our relationship with God as if he is the very hope that we have, the one thing knowing that his love is better than life?

Paul said it like this in Philippians chapter 3 verse 8 where he says, I count everything as a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For his sake, I've suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.

Anything that would be gained to me, anything that would make me feel like I'm someone, any accomplishments I have, any pedigree that I have that he's listed in Philippians chapter 3, he says, I count it all as rubbish just so I can know Christ.

[16:15] That is much more better. Even in the, what we're looking at at Philippians 1 to live as Christ in the dies game, we're saying that. He says there that to depart and be with Christ is much more better.

He uses terrible English grammar there, much more better than being here. Your love is better than life itself, David says.

Do we approach our relationship with God like that? Do we seek the face of God more than the hand of God? It's not bad to ask for God's help. In fact, that honors him.

He wants that. Do we seek his face? Now how do we cultivate a longing for God? I think we can observe some things from David here that really does help us to create, kind of cultivate this longing for God.

Now ultimately, what we're going to get to is that we can't conjure anything up. Only God can give us those desires and as Corey even just prayed that we would have that cultivated in us by the Lord.

[17:20] But David does give us some things here or at least we can look at his example here and learn some things about how to cultivate the longing for God. For instance, verse two, he says, so I've looked upon you in your sanctuary by holding your power and your glory.

That word for look there literally means experiential seeing. It's kind of like we might have the English phrase, my eyes were opened.

That doesn't mean I'm walking around my eyes closed and all of a sudden something happened and it opened up my eyes and now I see. We use that phrase, my eyes were opened, meaning that I now through experience of something, I see more clearly and have a different perspective.

That's the word that's used here in the Hebrew. So I've looked upon you in the sanctuary. I have experiential seeing of you. I've seen you. I gazed upon you. And so that's the first thing I would say is gazing at God helps us to cultivate a long for him.

How do we gaze at God? We have his word that he has revealed himself to us. We literally carry God's word in our pockets, most of us on our phones.

[18:30] Hopefully we're hiding it in our hearts through scripture memory, but we have the opportunity to gaze at the Lord in ways that David couldn't even imagine.

We've seen what God tells us, here is what I'm like through the life of Jesus. Things that which angels long to look, we get to see in the salvation through what we understand through scriptures. We get to see God. Do we seek him in his word? When you read your Bible, often I'm guilty where it feels like I'm kind of doing this just to ease my conscience, to feel better, to know that I had a quiet time.

Do we really seek God in his word? Do we even want to do that? But the first thing is gazing at God. The second thing, I think we see in verse four, and that is worshiping God.

Verse four, he says, so I will bless you as long as I live and in your name I will lift up my hands. Bless you to speak well of God, to call out to him, here's how good you are, here's who you are and what you have done.

[19 : 43] I lift my hands to you in praise and surrender. That's worshiping the Lord. And as we say to God, you are great because of these things.

And maybe we call out things to him that we know is true about him, his character, what he's done for us, all these things and worship to him. We get our eyes off of ourselves, get our eyes on God, and when we start seeing God in worship, it changes who we are.

It changes us. So we say, you are great. I bless you, I lift up my hands. So the first thing would be gazing at God. In verse four, we'd see him worshiping God.

In verse six, he says, when I remember you upon my bed and meditate on you in the watches of the night, number three would be he's recalling God's work in his life.

He's remembering. You may know this, but Deuteronomy five does a great job of talking about the Sabbath. And the Sabbath was a time to rest from your work and remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

[20 : 55] We need to have regular patterns in our life where we are remembering what God has done, recalling what he has done in our lives. And then he says, I meditate on these things.

I meditate on you in the night watches. So we see in verse one, this idea of I'm seeking you early and now he's saying, I meditate on you in the night watches and the watches of the night. It's this idea of meditating on God's word day and night, recalling what he has done for us and who he is. Maybe something that can get us out of kind of that place of being comfortably numb is morning and evening prayer where we're just spending some extraordinary times, things that are out of the ordinary of our daily life seeking him.

And when we do that to recall what he has done, remembering is a big deal in scripture. And I mean, even in night, I realize I'm not telling you guys anything you don't already know.

You've been in church for any length of time, this is not new stuff. And often we feel like we have to have something new in order to encounter God, but really more often than not, we need to remember what he's already done for us and who he is.

[22 : 11] And that needs to be one of the practices of our life that will help us be uncomfortably numb and move towards a longing for God. Last, it would be, I would say, hoping in God, verse eight.

He says, my soul clings to you. Your right hand upholds me. This idea of cling means to stand close to, to have a tight grip on where I'm saying, I'm joined to you, God, I'm sticking close to you.

I am going to be right where you are. I'm going to cling to you. And then he says, your right hand upholds me. This is like I'm clinging to you in hope, knowing that you've got me taken care of.

So putting our hope in God, what he's saying here is the actions of a person who says, you are my only hope. There is no hope outside of you, which means we have to look at those other things that we do hope in and denounce those and say, God is my only hope.

So gazing at God, worshiping God, recalling God's work in our lives, and hoping in God. This means that we need a renewed passion for when we spend time with God in His Word.

[23 : 24] Our devotional time, the simple things of a daily life, just having a renewed passion, recognizing who God is and what He has done for us.

This means we need to get excited about ways that we can intake God's Word, whether that's coming to church or to a Bible study or memorizing scripture, or even reading a Christian book where people are explaining to us who God is and what He's done for us.

We need to embrace those times, love those times of Bible study and prayer. Look forward to those times. And when we don't, maybe ask ourselves the question, what's keeping me from longing for God in a way that I would look for any opportunity to find Him?

And maybe it's my brother or sister over here who can lead me to the truth that will help me to long for God. So we look for opportunities to intake the Word, to learn more about Him, to be reminded of who He is and what He has done.

Whatever allows me to get more of God, that's what I want. Is that the cry of our hearts? Now Robert Murray McShane, one of his famous quotes, he said, the greatest need of my people is my

own holiness.

[24 : 39] That could be an overstatement from a minister. We tend to do that sometimes. But what if the greatest need of your family, the greatest need of your coworkers and your neighbors, the greatest need of your friends is for you to have communion with God in a way that changes the way you live.

What if that really is true, that the greatest need of the people around us is for me to walk with God and to long for Him? If that were true, would that change anything?

Would that change the way we approach spending time in the Word and in prayer? What is it that we long for?

Is it success? Is it a spouse? Is it a healthy bank account? All these are good things that we can have, but we don't need to love the gift more than the giver.

What would it take for us to long for God as David did? And the last thing I just want to point out is don't despise the wilderness.

[25 : 51] The wilderness, those hard times, those times of spiritual dryness are often the times that causes to long for God that wake us up from being comfortably numb.

That moment of weakness where we have to cling to Him for strength, don't despise those times, but instead use those times to truly long for God.

What would it take for us to long for God? Let's pray. We ask you to help us long for your presence, to long for your face, more than we long for other things.

This is our prayer and we pray that you would make it a reality in our life. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.